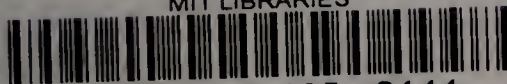


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A SOUVENIR
OF
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE



DAVID BELASCO

THE NORTH CAROLINA
THEATRE



a

A SOUVENIR
OF
SHAKESPEARE'S
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

AS PRESENTED
BY
DAVID BELASCO
AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE, NEW YORK
DECEMBER 21, 1922

NEW YORK
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A PREFACE
TO
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

AS ARRANGED FOR THE CONTEMPORARY STAGE

BY
DAVID BELASCO

All my life I have desired and purposed to produce THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE. They were the chief part of my earliest study, and my love for them increased with my years. In youth it was my frequent privilege to see many of the best actors our Stage has known in their finest Shakespearean embodiments, and, sometimes, personating minor characters, to act in association with them. The first words that I ever spoke in the theatre were words of Shakespeare,—those of the little *Richard, Duke of York*, in “King Richard III,” a part which, in childhood, I played at the old Theatre Royal, in Victoria, B.C., with the famous Charles Kean and Ellen Tree, his wife.

Year by year my familiarity with the best Shakespearean acting increased. Walter Montgomery (idol of my boyhood!) as *Marc Antony*, *Benedick* and *Hotspur*; John McCullough as *Brutus*, *Falconbridge* and *Lear*; Lawrence Barrett as *Hamlet*, *Iago* and *Cassius*; Barry Sullivan as *Richard the Third*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*; Adelaide Neilson as *Juliet*, *Viola* and *Imogen*; Edwin Booth as *Othello*, *Iago*, *Hamlet*, *Richard*, *Macbeth* and *Brutus*,—those, and many others like to those, were objects of my constant and admiring study. Among the plays of Shakespeare in which I appeared during

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my theatrical novitiate, and which then were acted under my stage management—some of them many times—were “Hamlet,” “King Richard III,” “Othello,” “Romeo and Juliet,” “Julius Cæsar,” “Macbeth,” “King John,” “King Lear,” “Coriolanus,” “Cymbeline,” “Measure for Measure,” “The Comedy of Errors,” “Much Ado About Nothing,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “The Taming of the Shrew,” “As You Like It,” “Twelfth Night” and “The Merchant of Venice.” Among the great players of *Shylock* for whom it has been my fortune to direct the stage and to rehearse the immortal drama of which he is the central and pervasive figure are McCullough, Barrett, Sullivan, Booth, and—by no means least—William E. Sheridan. In various early barnstorming ventures of my own I indulged my dominant desire and presented “The Merchant” and some other of the Bard’s great plays—with, be it said, a simplicity of scenic investiture which would cause productions made “in the Elizabethan manner” to appear as lavishly overloaded with ornament! But such juvenile endeavors do not count; and circumstances have not, until now, permitted me really to begin fulfillment of my ambitious purpose,—which I do with this oftpostponed but at last accomplished revival of “The Merchant of Venice,” in which it is my privilege to present the leader of the American Stage, my dear friend Mr. David Warfield, in one of the most exacting of test parts. In Shakespeare’s own words: “Joy be the consequence!”

It is my earnest purpose to follow this revival with presentments of many other great plays of Shakespeare—among them “King Lear,” with Mr. Warfield as the heart-broken and heart-breaking monarch of misery; “Romeo and Juliet,” “King Henry V,” “Julius Cæsar,” “Twelfth

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Night," and a trilogy comprising "King Richard II" and the First and Second Parts of "King Henry IV." The last-named three plays were in great part arranged for my presentation by my friend the late William Winter, to whom I was, at the time of his lamented death, under promise to produce them. They shall be brought forth as soon as it is possible for me to do so. All these ventures must, in the very nature of things, be beset by great difficulties and must entail a staggering burden of expense. They can be carried to success only with the approval, the hearty and practical encouragement, coöperation and support of the vast theatre-going public (which, in the past, has been so generously bestowed upon my enterprises) and of all those thoughtful and conscientious writers for the newspaper press who have at heart both the welfare of the community and the interests of the Stage and who by their critical commentaries so profoundly influence the popular taste. I do not subscribe to the despairing dictum of old Frederick Chatterton, sometime manager of Drury Lane Theatre, London, that "Byron spells bankruptcy and Shakespeare spells ruin,"—and the intellectual approval and practical support essential to adequate revivals of Shakespeare I not only earnestly bespeak but confidently expect to receive.

"The Merchant of Venice" is one of the plays by William Shakespeare mentioned by Francis Meres in his "Pallis Tamia." That work was published in 1598—and, therefore, the comedy must have been written at least a little earlier. It was entered at Stationers' Hall, London, in that year (1598), by James Roberts. It was published by Roberts, London, 1600 (the First Quarto), and it was issued again, in 1600, by Thomas Hayes (the Second Quarto). After that

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it was not reprinted until it appeared in the First Folio—1623.

The period of the action of "The Merchant of Venice" is generally accepted as being that in which it was written.¹ There is no known positive record of its first production. In the "Diary" of Philip Henslowe (partner in theatrical management with the famous Edward Alleyn, who founded Dulwich College, where the "Diary" is preserved) an allusion occurs to presentment of "the Venesyan Comedy" as having occurred in London on August 25, 1594. That allusion has been accepted by scholars as referring to the first production of "The Merchant of Venice." It seems a reasonable conjecture.² The dates assigned for composition of this comedy, by various commentators of authority, range from 1594 (Malone, Grant White, and others) to 1598 (Stevens, Hudson, and others). Charles Knight (without stipulating for any particular year) pleads, in general terms, for "a much earlier date than any hitherto assigned": *i.e.*, for a date much earlier than 1594. To me it has long seemed that "The Merchant of Venice" was well described by the late Richard Mansfield as "a fairy tale,"—that is, as wholly a figment of fancy, fittingly localized in any Venetian period remote enough to be romantic and colorful enough to be picturesque. Therefore, without attempting contribution to the fog of scholarly dispute as to when it was written, I have placed the period of its action at about the first quarter of the sixteenth century. That was what may be called The

¹ "The Venice of Shakespeare's own time, and the manners of that city, are delineated with matchless accuracy in this drama."—CHARLES KNIGHT.

² Dowden is inclined to think otherwise. He says: "This may have been Shakespeare's play, but more probably it was not."

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Golden Age of Venice—the time when she had touched the highest point of all her greatness; when, resplendent in the full meridian of her glory, she seemed, indeed, a jeweled queen of the summer seas. Selection of that time, accordingly, permits me to provide for this lovely comedy not only romantic environment but, also, pleasingly novel as well as beautiful costuming. And I have been further swayed in so placing the period of its action by the fact that Jews, especially those of wealth and therefore of influence, were then permitted to live in Venice (as it is indisputable that *Shylock* lived) outside of the ghetto.¹

¹ Origin of the term “ghetto” is obscure. The Jews’ quarters of Venice and Salerno are, in some documents of the eleventh century, called “Judaca” and “Judcaria.” It has been maintained that these became “Judaicam” (as, for example, in the designation of a place in Capua, “San Nicolo *ad Judaicam*”); then “Guideica” and thence by corruption into “ghetto.” According to another theory, it is derived from “gietto,” the common foundry in Venice, near to which was the first Jews’ quarter of that city. Still another theory derives the term from “borghetto,” a diminutive of the Italian “borgo,” a borough;—*i.e.*, a little borough. The word is used carelessly to-day to signify in a general manner any locality in a great city where Jews most do congregate. In earlier times it signified the exact locality in certain cities, enclosed by gated walls, to occupancy of which Jews were restricted by law. The walls and gates of the ghetto in Rome were not demolished until 1885.

During the Middle Ages (*circa*, 500–1500) the Jews were forbidden to leave their ghettos after sunset, when the gates thereof were locked; and they were also imprisoned therein upon Sundays and all other Christian holy days. The ghetto at Venice was established upon a separate island. “An island was appropriated to them [the Jews],” says the Shakespearean scholar Edmund Malone; “but they long ago overflowed into other parts of the city.” It would hardly be reasonable to suppose that reveling Christian masquers would or could penetrate at night into the dark and squalid region of the Venetian ghetto. Therefore we must suppose that *Shylock* was one of those Jews who, as Malone says, overflowed into other parts of the city and that his “sober house” must have been situate in some district more agreeable and readily accessible.

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The island city of Venice, of course, and Belmont, an imagined country estate, or "seat," somewhere upon the neighboring mainland shore, are the places of its action.

The text of *THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE* as revised and issued by that superb scholar and model editor, the Rev. Alexander Dyce, has been adopted as the basis for this arrangement.¹ In a few instances, however (but always for cogent reasons), punctuations or readings of other editors have been followed. In every such instance the editor preferred is also one of recognized authority. The spelling has been a little modified—being that sanctioned by the best contemporary usage in America: "color" instead of the English form of "colour"; "honor" instead of "honour," and the like.

As printed in the quartos and the First Folio "The Merchant of Venice" is divided into five acts; but the acts are not divided into scenes. Nicholas Rowe, in 1709, was the first editor to remedy that defect, arranging the comedy in fourteen scenes. Subsequent editors have increased the number of scenes to twenty, in which form this play is printed in many of the standard Library Editions. For reasons of expediency this arrangement presents it in five acts and eleven scenes, several of which are played practically without pause,—a method which long experience has taught me is specially pleasing to the contemporary audience, an audience that craves fluently continuous movement; that will not assemble in the theatre earlier than eight-fifteen, and that, as a whole, will not remain there later, at the latest, than a few minutes after eleven.²

¹ Second Edition.

² This is a fact I earnestly deprecate. But it *is* a fact,—and with facts there is no disputing.—D. B.

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No enumeration of CHARACTERS is prefixed to either of the quarto, or to the First Folio, texts of "The Merchant." In those texts we find the names of *Salarino*, *Slarino*, *Salanio*, *Solanio*, *Salino*, *Salerio*. These six sensibly have been reduced (by Dyce, Knight, and others) to *Salarino* and *Solanio*. A hair-splitting argument can, perhaps, be made to sustain a separate identity for *Salerio*; but for practical stage purposes there is no room for reasonable dispute: these characters should stand as *Salarino* and *Solanio*.

A whole literature of emendation, conjecture and commentary has grown up around the text and the characters of this play—as it has around those of all its fellows. It is not desirable to cumber a practical Acting Edition with discussions and citations almost interminable. But I would here specify that the whole of that literature (containing much of folly and conceit as well as much of wisdom and learning) has been heedfully examined in preparing the play for its present revival, and that ample authority exists for each and every decision as to moot points embodied in this arrangement.

In making it the following truths, as stated by one of the greatest and most reverend of Shakespeare scholars, and one of the wisest and most practical of modern stage adapters, have been heedfully regarded:

"The purists of the present, who utter the voice of indignant protest against even the slightest alteration of the 'original' Shakespeare structures, seem to suppose that earlier times displayed a greater reverence in this matter; but that is a mistake. The truth is that no one of Shakespeare's plays can be presented and spoken

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exactly as it is fashioned and written; and that, in the regular theatre, no one of them ever has been performed, since Shakespeare's time, without some curtailment. In the universities, and on scholastic occasions, the literal original [or what passes for such] has, now and then, been given. . . .¹ In Shakespeare's period, when theatrical performances occurred in the day, and when but little use was made of scenery, the whole of such a piece as 'King Richard III' might have been given; but no audience would endure it now.

"Every actor [and, let me interject, every producing manager,—D. B.] who, achieving distinction, has attained power, uses his own versions of Shakespeare; and if all those versions had been preserved, we should possess, in writing, the stage traditions which now, for the greater part, are preserved only in the memory of a rapidly vanishing race of players. . . ."

It is the duty of a producing manager to provide, for every play he elects to set upon the stage, both a company of players capable of its proper interpretation and a scenic investiture adequate to its requirements and contributory, in the fullest possible degree, to its enactment and appre-

¹"Hamlet" has been so acted, at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, for example; and several other of the plays have, on occasion, been presented in prolix if not absolutely complete detail, at various places,—notably, at the Victoria Theatre, London. Such revivals *in extenso* bring to mind one of the sensible remarks of Shakespeare's personal friend, "rare Ben Jonson" (who loved the man and honored his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any): "I remember that the players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare that in his writings, whatever he penned, he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been: 'Would he had blotted a thousand!'" His works would, indeed, have been improved had he done so.

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hension.¹ In a matter so largely one of taste there never can be universal accord; and to the end of time there will be divergent ideas of adequacy in the setting of Shakespeare. Ever since Charles Kean, for example, began his series of sumptuous revivals of Shakespeare, at the old Princess' Theatre, London, with "King John,"²—February 9, 1852,—there has been a wail of clamorous complaint about "overloading Shakespeare with scenery" and an outcry as to the need of reverting, in Shakespearean revivals, to "the original text."

It is, of course, to be conceded that neither the plays of Shakespeare nor those of any other dramatist should be "overloaded" with scenery. Also, it is conceded that where a clear, consistent, dramatic "original text" exists it should, as far as possible, be adhered to.

In this matter the first disagreement must necessarily come over the question of what constitutes scenic overloading. Shall we have the stage practically bare? Or, shall we have it set to represent as closely as possible the scenes specified? A very small minority of the theatre-going public, which enjoys mere rhetoric and declamation, approves presentation of plays upon stages almost barren and most insufficiently illumined. The immense majority of that pub-

¹The public ought, I think, to reflect that it is only the desire and purpose of a theatrical manager to give to it what it is entitled to expect and to receive which prompts such a one to assume the burdensome expense of making an adequate production—an expense which, to-day, is often all but prohibitive.

²Kean had previously brought out "Twelfth Night" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor," but "King John,"—which he first produced at the old Park Theatre, New York, six years earlier, November 16, 1846,—was really the first of his great, his sumptuous, revivals, for the making of which he was censured.

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lic, upon the other hand, prefers and demands (and is therein reasonable and right) representations designed to create illusions: representations wherein actors, impersonating and interpreting character, are required to "suit the word to the action, the action to the word," and wherein, also, stage directors strive to suit the scenic investiture to the indications of time and place and to the dramatic and histrionic needs of plays presented. Yet, by the minority, such stage directors are those most often (and most unjustly) censured for "overloading"¹ Shakespeare with scenery.

Charles Kean, in the Shakespeare revivals to which I have alluded, depended far more upon Acting than he did upon scenery and accessories; a reading of the lists of his theatrical companies will show that. And it is certain not only that he was associated with one of the most accomplished of actresses, Ellen Tree, but, also, that he was himself truly a great actor. The complaint against his rich settings owes much of its endurance (if, indeed, it does not owe its origin) to jealousy on the part of a still greater actor, William Charles Macready, whose rival Kean was in some sort. Macready, after retiring from the Stage, was bitterly resentful of the success, public applause and social favor which

¹Shakespeare himself was, beyond doubt, keenly appreciative of the absolute and deplorable inadequacy of the oft-vaunted Elizabethan Stage to proper presentation of some of his great plays. Consider, in this connection, his lament in "King Henry V," about the unsatisfactory, and indeed contemptible, manner in which, upon that stage, one of the most famous of decisive battles was indicated:

"Where—O, for pity!—we shall much disgrace,
With four or five most vile and ragged foils,
The name of Agincourt!"

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were lavished upon the younger player.¹ Commenting upon Kean's revival of "The Winter's Tale," and upon the careful attention therein bestowed upon investiture, he said:

"Evidently the accessories swallow up the poetry and action. . . . I take it so much to heart, because I feel myself in some measure responsible. I, in my endeavor to give to Shakespeare *all* his attributes; to *enrich* his poetry with scenes [settings] worthy of its interpretation: to give to his tragedies *their due* magnificence, and to his comedies their entire brilliancy, have set an example which is accompanied with great peril,—for the public is willing to have the magnificence without the tragedy, and the poet is swallowed up in display. . . ."

Those ill-natured comments by Macready (a much embittered man as well as one of the greatest of artists), apropos of the work of Kean, were merely an ebullition of envy. He perceived himself being excelled as a producer, and he vented his spleen in detraction. His solicitude concerning "the poet" was entirely superfluous. With the public, then as now and always, in a presentation of Shakespeare "the play's the thing": no revival of any of his plays that has depended for support merely upon "display" has ever had, at best, more than a fleeting prosperity: many of such productions have been disastrous failures. A diamond is always a diamond—but cut, polished and placed in a suitable and

¹ This jealousy was so well known among their contemporaries that when Kean lost a valuable ring which had been given to him by Queen Victoria, in recognition of his histrionic and managerial achievements, the sardonic Douglas Jerrold remarked: "It will probably be found sticking in Macready's crop."

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lovely setting it always shows to better advantage than when left, rough and imperfect, embedded in clay. To give to Shakespeare's plays, tragic or comic, their wholly adequate, *due* investiture—that, and nothing more—has been, and is, the honorable ambition of his most truly appreciative and reverent producers. Such, certainly, is my ambition in reviving "The Merchant of Venice." But to recognize that not everything which Shakespeare wrote is either good literature or good drama does not injure,—on the contrary it aids,—in making satisfactory revivals of his plays.

The same complaint, nevertheless, that was made against Kean has been uttered, in successive periods, against Kean's successors,—against, for example, Lester Wallack (when he revived "Much Ado About Nothing"), Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, Augustin Daly, Charles Calvert, and—most of all—against Henry Irving. Not long ago I read an article extolling the methods of producers who throw away all the beautiful and invaluable improvements which have been developed during the last three hundred years and revert to primitive methods. In that article I found the following amazing remarks:

"... The two producers who did most in England to keep Shakespeare on the boards, also *did a great deal to ruin Shakespeare*, by denying that he knew his business. . . .

"Those two¹ producers were Sir Henry Irving, who

¹ It is rank and ignorant injustice thus to ignore all that was done, in England, in the way of "keeping Shakespeare on the stage," by Macready, Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps (who produced thirty-two of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays—a record never equaled), Charles Calvert and Herbert Beerbohm-Tree.

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chopped up the plays and *rearranged* the scenes to make as few changes of *locale* as possible. He *ruined Shakespeare's construction*.

"Sir Frank Benson, who trained a whole swarm of Shakespearean actors. He let loose upon the poor land that *plague of mouthing and solemn elocutionists* who have ruined whatever Irving and the other producers had left of Shakespeare's splendid and racy humanity. . . ."

There is a kind of men who very quickly grow tired of hearing Aristides called the just and who (vicious with envy) take a sort of malicious pleasure in girding at the great achievements of leaders in any calling. Silent contempt, no doubt, often is the wisest way to treat their ebullitions of disparagement. Yet it is not right that theatrical history should be falsified, and the reputations of noble artists and devoted public servants be traduced, without protest. Henry Irving was (in my judgment) the greatest stage producer that ever lived. The British Government (with the hearty approval of the whole English-speaking world) made him a knight (the first actor ever, as such, to be so honored), in recognition of his unequalled services to the Theatre and the Art of Acting and thus to the Public. And now, seventeen years after his death, we are apprised (upon authority of persons who have never done anything of the slightest note for anybody!) that his beneficent services consisted, in large part, of "chopping up" Shakespeare and ruining or destroying his "construction" and "the splendid and racy humanity" which he depicted!

Sir Frank Benson (a disciple of Irving, who began his

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stage career under him, at the London Lyceum Theatre, in 1883) has long maintained, in his theatrical traveling company, the best training school accessible, in recent years, to the English-speaking stage aspirant. The one thing which Irving detested most in the Theatre was a "mouthing, solemn elocutionist." His derisive name for such a one was "a spouter." He preached, practiced and enforced, from first to last, the theory of acting which at all times subordinates mere elocution to *impersonation*. One of the texts upon which he descanted, time and again, as illustrating his doctrine, is the terrific speech of *Shylock*, in the famous Street Scene of "The Merchant." That theory and practice of impersonation instead of declamation Benson learned from Irving, and throughout his long and admirable career he has inculcated it in the actors whom he has trained—yet we are now informed, falsely as well as flippantly, that Benson was honored by his government, as Irving had been, not for merit, but for training and letting loose upon the stage "a plague" of "spouters," of "mouthing and solemn elocutionists"! Such mean belittlement of greatness "is not, and it cannot come to, good."

Irving produced twelve of Shakespeare's plays. When he first came out in "Hamlet," at the London Lyceum (under management, by the way, of an American, old "Chain-Lightning" Bateman), that tragedy was given for 200 consecutive performances (the longest run ever achieved with it anywhere), and the total cost of the production, scenery and dresses (the latter being hired), was—\$475! When Irving again revived it at the Lyceum, four years later, the amount expended on the production was approximately \$5,000. When (November 1, 1879) he made his famous re-

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vival of "The Merchant of Venice" (which for artistic beauty and general excellence has never been excelled) the production account totaled but \$5,750. During the run of the piece (250 consecutive performances—the longest run ever achieved, anywhere, with a play by Shakespeare) Irving spent, for upkeep and new scenery and costumes, an additional \$4,090—a grand total of only \$9,840. According to an old proverb "money talks." Well, it does. And, on this subject, I seem to hear it saying: "You cannot produce a Shakespeare comedy, setting it in thirteen scenes; dress upward of 150 different persons, and run the play for more than seven consecutive months, on a total production expenditure of less than \$10,000—and still do much scenic 'overloading'!"¹

The second point of disagreement always comes as to the original text. Clamor for the complete, unexpurgated, *original* text of Shakespeare arises, primarily, from a fallacious assumption—the assumption, namely, that there *exists* a clear, definite, *complete* "original text." All competent Shakespeare scholars are aware, of course, that there is no such thing. Yet, by way of censuring modern producers, who, of necessity, edit and arrange Shakespeare's plays for the contemporary stage, it is sarcastically alleged that "Shakespeare knew what he was doing when he put

¹ "Except in *one* instance [meaning, when he produced "King Henry VIII"] the scenic art has *never* been made the cardinal element of my policy. . . .

"*Nothing*, to my mind, *can* be 'overdone' upon the stage that is beautiful—I mean, correct and harmonious,—and that *heightens*, not dwarfs, the imagination and reality. I took no less pains [than he had taken in staging Shakespeare] in producing [the farce of] 'The Captain of the Watch' or 'The Two Roses'."—HENRY IRVING.

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together his plays in *short scenes*, developing rapidly on one another. . . .”

Such observations as that display ignorance—because they reveal a supposition that Shakespeare made his plays exactly as they stand to-day in those superb monuments of scholarship and devoted labor, the modern standard Library Editions. Such, of course, is not the case. Save by inference and deduction, we possess comparatively little knowledge of how Shakespeare “put together his plays.” But part of the knowledge on that subject which we *do* possess is that he did *not*, exclusively,—or even in most instances,—put them together in “short scenes.”

Counting the two parts of “King Henry IV” and the three parts of “King Henry VI,” as separate plays, and including both “Titus Andronicus” and “Pericles,” there are thirty-seven Shakespeare plays. Our chief source of their text is the First Folio, 1623. Eighteen of the plays are therein printed for the first time. The others had been previously printed in one, or more, quarto editions. Some of those quartos were surreptitious or piratical (*e.g.*, “The Merry Wives of Windsor” and “King Henry VI—Part One”).¹ Some of them were authorized and are invaluable. The type for the First Folio was (probably) set, in some instances, from manuscripts (*e.g.*, “The Tempest”),² in some, from playhouse (prompt) copies—which may have been made up on copies of printed quartos or may have been in manuscript—and in some other instances, beyond doubt, from earlier quartos.

The First Folio, while it certainly is what that greatest of

¹ Halliwell-Phillipps.

² *Ibid.*

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Shakespeare scholars, J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, called it,—namely, “The most interesting and valuable book in the whole range of English literature,”—is, also, certainly *the worst compiled, edited and printed work*, of major importance, ever issued from the press.¹ It has been authoritatively said to contain approximately 20,000 demonstrable errors.² In the plays, as there printed, are found some scenes or passages which do not occur in any of the previously printed quartos—while, on the other hand, in some of those quartos are scenes or passages which do not occur in the First Folio. This, notably, is the case with “Hamlet” and “King Richard III.” In almost innumerable instances “readings” vary. “Troilus and Cressida” is, practically speaking, an irreparable jumble. “King John” is, scenically, much tangled. “Macbeth” is notoriously corrupt.³ “Antony and Cleopatra” and “Troilus and Cressida,” as we have received them (First Folio), are not divided into scenes, or

¹ A great deal of pother is made, from time to time (especially by Baconian fanatics), over the fact that we do not possess the original manuscripts of Shakespeare. Everything considered, it would be more strange if we *did* possess them. The Globe Theatre was burnt, June (29?), 1613, during a performance of “King Henry VIII” and, beyond reasonable doubt, many of those manuscripts were then destroyed. Not much care was taken of manuscripts after they had been “set up.” Moreover, London was swept by a terrible fire, in 1666, in which old St. Paul’s Cathedral was consumed, and along with it “a vast quantity of books *and manuscripts* that had been brought from all the threatened parts of the city and heaped beneath its arches.” Thus might well have perished the manuscripts of the later Shakespeare plays—first printed in the Folio—supposing them to have survived for forty-three years after that book issued.

² William Winter.

³ “Shakespeare wrote for an ill-provided stage, and there is reason to believe that his plays, as they have come down to us, contain *language that was foisted upon them by other writers.*”—WILLIAM WINTER.

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even into acts. "The Comedy of Errors," "A Midsummer Night's Dream,"¹ "Much Ado About Nothing," "Love's Labor's Lost," "Julius Cæsar," and "Coriolanus," like "The Merchant of Venice," *are* divided into acts, but *not* into scenes. And yet modern producers (who are scrupulous to present the great plays with due consideration of unity, consistency, continuity, clarity and dramatic effect) are censured and aspersed for not setting them upon the stage, according to "the original text," and in many "short scenes," as Shakespeare made them!

Much of the fallacious (or fictitious) reverence for "the original text" of Shakespeare which has been manifested during the last century or so (and manifested, generally, by idlers, in disparagement of the work of sincere and competent producers) originated with the famous English political agitator and philologist, John Horne Tooke (1736-1812), who, very preposterously, wrote that "The First Folio [of Shakespeare] is *the only* edition worth reading" and that "it is much to be wished that an edition of Shakespeare were given *literatim* according to the First Folio . . . for, by the presumptuous license of the dwarfish commentators, we risk the loss of Shakespeare's genuine text, which that Folio assuredly contains, notwithstanding some *few slight* [!] errors of the press."

Halliwell-Phillipps, with terse restraint, remarks that: "Horne Tooke was not so well read as the commentators, none of whom could have exhibited such *an entire ignorance* of the value of the quartos,"—nor, be it added, of the state of the text as it stands in the First Folio. Indeed, it is

¹ In the first quarto, "The Dream" is not even divided into acts.

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proper to say that Tooke's observations suggest the probability that he never really studied a copy of the Folio,—which exhibits such a jumble of errors and defects that no publisher of to-day would accept it as printers' copy, let alone offer it for sale as a finished product of the book-maker's craft! Since the time of Horne Tooke we have had many editors and commentators (Dyce, Staunton, Knight, Collier, White, Clarke and Wright, Keightley and Furness, among them) who have rendered invaluable service in correction and coördination of Shakespeare's plays.

And the producers who (in my judgment) most truly revere the Great Dramatist and best serve his fame and the public interest are not those who make of his plays archaic and tiresome curiosities, but those who (sensibly utilizing an eclectic and purged text) present those plays in form suitable to the modern stage and contemporary taste.¹ I cannot comprehend, for example, how it can be thought either reverent of Shakespeare, or agreeable, or necessary to satisfaction of an audience assembled in the theatre, to hear *Lorenzo* rebuke *Launcelot* with "the getting up of the negro's belly" (Act. V., Sc. 1, ed. Dyce),—and in my stage arrangement of "The Merchant" all such exquisite gems of the original text will be found conspicuous by their absence.

¹ Dr. Johnson frankly remarked of Shakespeare that: "He has scenes of undoubted and perpetual excellence, but perhaps not one play which, if it were now exhibited as the work of a contemporary writer, would be heard to the conclusion."

And William Winter, with his customary simplicity and saneness, has written: "No person, I believe, has ever entertained a more profound veneration for the genius of Shakespeare than is cherished by me. But I have long felt that the habit of ascribing perfection to everything that Shakespeare wrote, merely because *he* wrote it, is one of the chief obstacles to a right understanding of his works. . . . He should be venerated

A PREFACE TO

In arranging this Acting Edition of "The Merchant of Venice" my steadfast purpose has been to provide a properly full and entirely adequate, correct, and therefore satisfactory, presentation of Shakespeare's ever-favorite tragicomedy, within the limit of time available,—about three hours. In order to accomplish this, all that it was found practically possible to do for the acceleration of the dramatic movement has been done, by omission of expatiative passages and of all such scenes as experience has shown to be supererogatory,¹ and also (as previously signified) by deletion of all such speeches as, being gross and vulgar, are offensive to decency and good taste.

In performance of the work of arrangement the best of the earlier stage versions have been studiously examined and considered (most of all, those made by Charles Kean, Edwin Booth—1878 and 1887—and Henry Irving). It is my hope and belief that the resultant fabric, while it is in some sense peculiar to itself, will be found, also, to be incorporative of all that is best in the arrangements of precedent producers.

I recently read a letter by that great American theatrical manager Augustin Daly, addressed to his friend and mine, the late William Winter, when they were at work upon a stage arrangement (never produced) of "All's Well That Ends Well," in which he expressed some views on adaptation which seem to me worthy of record:

and extolled for his virtues, not for his faults. As an artist he was often heedless; there is not even one of his plays which, as we possess it, would not be better had it been carefully revised by him, and one object which should invariably and conscientiously be sought in the stage presentation of his plays is the exclusion of *the errors and blemishes* of 'the original text'."

¹Notably, the *Arragon* Casket Scene.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

“ . . . My only idea of adaptation is to make as few changes of scene as it is possible to get along with, and to reach this end it will only be necessary to transpose a few of the scenes,—as I did in ‘The School for Scandal.’

“In that piece there are *not fifteen words* added to Sheridan.

“ . . . There are [in Shakespeare] some obsolete and incomprehensible phrases which might be ‘adapted,’ I think; but that I leave to your taste. We want to make Shakespeare attractive to the greater mass: and, to that end (as Charles Dickens advised Bulwer), we must concede something to them. . . .”

And I would also commend, to persons solicitous concerning the text as it stands cut and arranged in my version, the following remarks by one of the most reverent and scrupulous editors of Shakespeare, the late Charles Edward Flower—who, it is interesting to recall, did his editorial work within sight of the spot where the Swan of Avon ceased from singing and where his ashes lie at rest:

“Some learned critics object to *any* omissions, or any alterations in the order of scenes, however *necessary to the exigencies of the stage*, and say that Shakespeare’s plays should be acted only as he wrote them, *forgetting* that the ‘original text’ [*i.e.*, the quartos and the First Folio] are *very* corrupt, and that THE DIVISIONS INTO SCENES ARE, IN MOST INSTANCES, ONLY CONJECTURAL. . . It might as well be objected that Shakespeare’s plays ought never to be ACTED, as we understand acting, but should simply be *declaimed* before a tapestry screen. . . .”

A PREFACE TO

In his Notes on the Arrangement of "Hamlet," Flower says:

"In the editions published during the last [the eighteenth] century this play was divided into a great number of scenes, and some exception has been taken to the recent practice of *reducing* this number, by playing several scenes continuously, without change or pause. This, instead of being an innovation, is really a return to the original form,"¹

—an important fact which I have heedfully borne in mind, notably in my treatment of the Second Act of "The Merchant," in which there is only one change of set, and that a change supplementary to the text of Shakespeare, made at the close of the Act.

The whole long and sometimes acrimonious controversy over proper methods of reviving the plays of Shakespeare

¹ It was as a consequence of Mr. Flower's often expressed wish and suggestion that "Hamlet" was, finally, presented "in its entirety" (the performance lasting about seven hours and being given in two parts, the first in the afternoon, the second at night), at Stratford-upon-Avon. But Mr. Flower was an eminently sensible man, and he quite comprehended that such a representation was suitable to a special occasion only and neither feasible nor desirable in the regular theatre. He had a perfect understanding of the practical requirements of the stage, for, working upon the basis of all available English stage arrangements (including those of Cibber, Garrick, J. P. Kemble, E. Kean, Macready, C. Kean, Phelps, C. Calvert and Irving) and of many used or made in Germany, he had prepared an invaluable students' Working Edition of Shakespeare, preserving practically entire the definitive texts, while—by use of two sizes of type, supplemented with explanatory notes in italics—simultaneously showing the various cuts and transpositions required by the exigencies of the modern Theatre and sanctioned by the most scholarly usage.

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upon the Stage of to-day (whether in respect to the nature of investiture or the editing of the text) resolves itself into this:

Should a producer utilize all the expedients, devices and improvements which incessant study and continuous scientific discovery and invention have developed during the last three hundred years: or, Should he (not for a special educational occasion but as a permanent policy) throw away ambition, and with it all the advancement that has been made in that long time, and revert to the crude, inferior, wholly inadequate methods which were in vogue (and which were contemned while they were in vogue) during the infancy of the modern Theatre?

To do the latter, honestly and consistently, we should, among other things, have to banish women from our stage and to have such parts as *Portia*, *Nerissa* and the amorous *Jessica* represented by "squeaking boys": to dispense with suitable music and the almost limitless advantages and all the exquisite beauties of electrical lighting: to forego the use of proper make-up (wigs, pigments, etc.): to do away with all adequate scenery, furniture and dressing: to present—for example—"The Merchant of Venice" not in the garb and the environment of the Venice of the sixteenth century, but in the cast-off garments of the nobility of Elizabeth's court, and in a rough, semi-barren environment, scarce dignified enough for a bear-baiting!¹

¹Shakespeare students, of course, are familiar with the general circumstances of a performance, at a public playhouse, in the time of Shakespeare. The average theatre-goer (to whom primarily these words are addressed and for whom my productions are made) may not be; and therefore, as possibly suggestive and interesting, I append a description of such a performance, quoted from Taine: see page 41.

A PREFACE TO

The Public certainly would not tolerate such ineptitude in management. Nor is it possible for me to doubt that Shakespeare himself would eagerly have employed all the many invaluable accessories of modern stagecraft if they had been available to him. Therefore, in making this revival of "The Merchant of Venice," what I am sure Shakespeare would have done, what I am sure he would do if he were here to-day, that I have done—and availed myself to the full of all those accessories and aids to effect. But in the doing so I have neither forgotten nor disregarded the study, insight and achievement of three centuries of precedent labor. Thus it will, I trust, be found that, while making innovations such as life-long study and experience have suggested, I have neither cumbered the stage with superfluous and hampering embellishments nor disregarded anything valuable in the traditions with which, through generations of genius, this great play has become encrusted. From the very first it has been a cardinal article of my artistic creed that only by utilizing *all* that is best—*all* that is true, right and effective—in old and tried methods, together with all that is of manifest value in new ones, can a dramatic director give to his public what that public is entitled to receive. To nothing, perhaps, more than to methods of stage representation are the wise words of Pope applicable:

"Alike fantastic, if too new or old;
Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Thus, I may venture to claim, it will be found that I have wrought neither as a blind adherent to old ways nor as

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

a mere presumptuous innovator, but as a humble, reverent and most earnest student and disciple of Shakespeare, of the great leaders of my beloved calling, and of Truth and Beauty. I have at least done my utmost to *deserve* success, and therefore with equanimity I await the Public's verdict—remembering the words of The Master himself:

“For never anything comes amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it!”

David Belasco.

October, 1922.

“Here lies the Jew
That Shakespeare drew.”

—*Pope*

CONCERNING SHYLOCK

Into the controversy as to whether *Shylock* is a monster or a martyr I shall not, here and now, enter. Mr. Warfield's performance is, I am sure, the best essay upon his conception which could be provided. But some singular doctrines concerning the seriousness, I might perhaps say the sincerity, of the character of *Shylock* have, in the coming on of time, got themselves accepted. Not long ago, for example, I read warm commendation of an actor who presented him as a short, fat, *red-haired*, smirking Jew, grotesque and comical. Indeed, of recent years, the assertion that *Shylock* was acted in Shakespeare's day as a red-haired, *comic* character has been so often made that, at last, ignorance has accepted mere iterant asseveration as truth and this notion has become widely prevalent.

It is a notion both false and preposterous. There is nothing in the character, the conduct, or the experience of *Shylock* that is in the least comic. Nor is there any sufficient ground for assuming and alleging that *Shylock* was ever acted in the presence, or the period, of his creator as a comic character. As *Hamlet* is an embodiment of introspective, suffering intellect,—*Macbeth*, of guilty, conscience-scourged ambition,—*Lear*, of paternal love, outraged and anguished by filial ingratitude,—*Iago*, of diabolical treachery,—so *Shylock* is an embodiment (and a supreme one) of vindictive hatred over-reaching and destroying itself in a hideous purpose of revenge. And he is not the less so because, in his final discomfiture and utter ruin, he is, in some sort, pathetic. There is nothing comic in such a character and experience; there is much that is afflictingly tragic.

CONCERNING SHYLOCK

Intelligent reading of the text of Shakespeare's play can leave no slightest doubt of the vital, rugged, grim and essentially tragic character of *Shylock*. Here and there, indeed, that text reveals or suggests a momentary, fleeting, grisly jocularity; but any person who can heedfully and apprehensively study it and find in that character anything comic, assuredly must possess a most peculiar sense of humor.

The tradition that *Shylock* was originally played in a *red wig* rests upon a probable (not to say a manifest) forgery. There is no known, authentic chronicle containing specific record of the first player of *Shylock*. It is assumed, however, and with reasonable certainty, that it was the famous actor Richard Burbage (*circa* 1568-1619).

Burbage was the principal player at the Globe and Blackfriars theatres. One authority remarks of him that "He was specially famous for his impersonation of *Richard the Third* and other Shakespearean characters, and it was *in tragedy* that he most excelled." Burbage was closely associated with Shakespeare (whom he survived for about two years and who remembered him in his will), and, as he was the original performer of many other of Shakespeare's great *tragic* characters, it is entirely reasonable to suppose that he was that of *Shylock*, also. But as *Shylock* is manifestly a tragic part, and as Burbage "especially excelled" as a tragic actor there is no reason to assume that he played the part in anything but a *tragic* manner.

When he died, some commemorative verses about him were written anonymously,—and, perhaps, published. Those verses are entitled: "A Funeral Elegy, on the Death of the Famous Actor, Richard Burbage, who died on Saturday in Lent, the 13th of March, 1618[9]."

CONCERNING SHYLOCK

This "Funeral Elegy" was first published (in "The Gentleman's Magazine," London, 1825) by Mr. Haslewood, who owned the original manuscript,—which, later, was placed in the Huth Library.

J. Payne Collier reprinted that Elegy in his "History of English Dramatic Poetry," London, 1831. In his "New Particulars Regarding the Works of Shakespeare," London, 1836, Collier mentions as belonging to Heber, a *second* manuscript copy of the verses, and *asserts* that he had subsequently "met with a *third* [manuscript] copy of the same Elegy, in which the list of [Burbage's] characters is enlarged [from three] . . . to no fewer than twenty, of which *twelve* are in plays by Shakespeare. . . ."

This alleged third copy of the Elegy on Burbage, which Collier asserts that he *saw*, he printed, in full, in his "Memoirs of Actors," London, 1846. In Haslewood's manuscript there are eighty-six lines. In the alleged "third copy," as printed by Collier, there are one hundred and twenty-four lines. The additional thirty-eight lines thus promulgated were rejected by C. M. Inglby, when compiling his "Century of Praise"; and Miss Toulmin Smith, in the second edition thereof, remarks significantly that *the original manuscript* containing them has "not yet come to light."

Among those additional thirty-eight lines published by Collier occur the following, which allude to "The Merchant of Venice" and *Shylock*:

"Heart-broke Philaster, and Amintas, too,
Are lost forever; with the red-hair'd Jew,
Which sought the bankrupt merchant's pound of flesh,
By woman-lawyer caught in his own mesh . . ." &c.

CONCERNING SHYLOCK

Collier was an indefatigable antiquarian and a profoundly learned Shakespeare scholar, but his many forgeries (in the Perkins Folio of Shakespeare, and elsewhere) make it difficult, if not rationally impossible, to accept as genuine *any* uncorroborated "discovery" made by him. And it must be remembered that those lines additional to the old anonymous Elegy (lines absolutely unauthenticated and—to speak frankly—beyond doubt spurious) are *the sole* "authority" for asserting that *Shylock* was played, in Shakespeare's day, in a red wig.

Collier declared, also, that Burbage wore "a long false nose, such as was worn by" Edward Alleyn, when acting *Barabas*, in Marlowe's "The Jew of Malta." That is only an assumption by Collier; he had no authority for making it. But, even if it be correct; and if, furthermore, the additional lines of the Elegy be accepted as authentic—what then? *A red wig is no bar to a tragic impersonation—nor is a long nose.* Was Richard Mansfield's personation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* any the less tragic because he wore an elongated snout, when playing that part? Who that ever saw the younger James W. Wallack's red-haired *Fagin* would ever have called it a *comic* embodiment?

The false notion that Shylock was at first played as a comic character originated in the fact that Thomas Doggett (died 1721), the first actor definitely recorded as a performer of *Shylock*, was an actor of *comic and farcical parts*. The old prompter John Downes writes of him, in the "Roscius Anglicanus": "Mr. Doggett, on the stage, he's very aspect abund [whatever that may have been], wearing a farce in his face," and Downes further pronounces him to be "the *only comic original* now [1708] extant." His friend,

CONCERNING SHYLOCK

and one-time partner, old Colley Cibber, also wrote of Doggett that "his greatest success was in characters of lower life," and that "in songs, and particular dances, too, of *humor*, he had no competitor." Doggett did present, in a coarsely comic manner, a character called *Shylock* (described as "a stock-jobbing Jew"); but he did so only in the atrocious perversion of "The Merchant of Venice" made by George Granville, Viscount of Lansdowne, which was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, London, in 1701, and which held the stage during the next forty years.

That perversion bears about as much likeness to the comedy by Shakespeare as does the light diffused by a tallow dip to that of the sun. When the noble George thrust his ears through Shakespeare's play he made only one good change—he altered the title from "The Merchant of Venice" to "The Jew of Venice." To assume that Shakespeare's great character of *Shylock* was originally played by Burbage (or should ever be played by anybody) as a humorous character because Doggett (of necessity) played Lord Lansdowne's *Shylock* as a "comic original" is about as rational as it would be to suppose that *Hamlet* should be presented as a humorous character, because the once-famous clown George L. Fox used, years ago, to present a burlesque *Hamlet*, in a popular travesty of the tragedy, at old Niblo's Garden.

The great Shakespeare scholar, the elder Horace Howard Furness, remarks on this subject: "There is *no ground* for the belief that Shakespeare's *Shylock* was ever presented on the stage in a comic light. To assert it is to imply that Lansdowne's '*Shylock*' and Shakespeare's *Shylock* are identical."

CONCERNING SHYLOCK

And the great actor and theatrical manager Edwin Booth (a diligent, scrupulous student of Shakespeare and one of the greatest players of *Shylock* ever seen) wrote, in a published letter on this subject:

“ . . . ’Tis nonsense to suppose that *Shylock* was represented in other than a serious vein by Burbage, merely because he ‘made up’ (doubtless, after some representation of Judas) with red hair, to emphasize the vicious expression of his features. Is there any *authority* for the assertion which some make that he also wore a long nose?¹ What if he did? A clever actor once played the part of *Tubal* with me, and wore red hair and a *hook’d nose*. He did not make the audience laugh: ’twas not his purpose; but he looked the very creature that could sympathize with *Shylock*. His make-up was admirable. He’s the son of the famous John Drew, and is the leading man with Augustin Daly’s company. . . .”

¹None—it rests, as aforesaid, merely on the unsupported statement of a diligent but unscrupulous antiquarian.

THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

FROM TAINE'S "HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE"

"There were already seven theatres in London, in Shakespeare's time. . . . Great and rude contrivances, awkward in their construction, barbarous in their appointments; but a fervid imagination readily supplied all that they lacked, and hardy bodies endured all inconveniences without difficulty. On a dirty site, on the banks of the Thames, rose the principal theatre, the Globe, a sort of hexagonal tower, surrounded by a muddy ditch, on which was hoisted a red flag. The common people could enter as well as the rich: there were sixpenny, twopenny, even penny seats; but they could not see it without money. If it rained, and it often rains in London, the people in the pit, butchers, mercers, bakers, sailors, apprentices, received the streaming rain upon their heads. I suppose they did not trouble themselves about it; it was not so long since they began to pave the streets of London, and men like these have had experience of sewers and puddles; they were not afraid of catching cold. While waiting for the piece, they amuse themselves after their fashion; drink beer, crack nuts, eat fruit, howl, and now and then resort to their fists; they have been known to fall upon the actors, and turn the theatre upside down. At other times they were dissatisfied and went to the tavern to give the poet a hiding, or toss him in a blanket; they were coarse fellows, and there was no month when the cry of 'Clubs!' did not call them out of their shops to exercise their brawny arms. When the beer took effect, there was a great upturned barrel in the pit, a peculiar receptacle for general use. The smell rises, and then comes the cry, 'Burn the

THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

juniper!' They burn some in a plate on the stage, and the heavy smoke fills the air. Certainly the folk there assembled could scarcely get disgusted at anything, and cannot have had sensitive noses. In the time of Rabelais there was not much cleanliness to speak of. Remember that they were hardly out of the middle-age, and that in the middle-age man lived on a dunghill.

"Above them, on the stage, were the spectators able to pay a shilling, the elegant people, the gentlefolk. These were sheltered from the rain, and if they chose to pay an extra shilling, could have a stool. To this were reduced the prerogatives of rank and the devices of comfort; it often happened that there were not stools enough; then they lie down on the ground: this was not a time to be dainty. They play cards, smoke, insult the pit, who gave it them back without stinting and throw apples at them into the bargain. They also gesticulate, swear in Italian, French, English; crack aloud jokes in dainty, composite, high-colored words. . . .

"There were no preparations or perspectives; few or no movable scenes; their imaginations took all this upon them. A scroll in big letters announced to the public that they were in London or Constantinople; and that was enough to carry the public to the desired place. There was no trouble about probability. Sir Philip Sidney writes:

" 'You shall have Asia on the one side, and Africke of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the Plaier when hee comes in must ever begin with telling where hee is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three Ladies walke to gather flowers, and then we must beleieve the stage to be a

THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

garden. By and by wee heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, then wee are to blame if we accept it not for a rocke; . . . while in the meane time two armies flie in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberall. For ordinary it is, that two young Princes fall in love, after many traverses, she is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy, hee is lost, goweth a man, falleth in love, and is readie to get another childe; and all this in two houres space.' ”

DAVID BELASCO
Presents
MR. WARFIELD
AS SHYLOCK
in
WM. SHAKESPEARE'S
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

THE CHARACTERS AS CAST

DUKE OF VENICE.....	A. E. Anson
PRINCE OF MOROCCO.....	Herbert Grimwood
ANTONIO, the Merchant.....	Ian MacLaren
BASSANIO, his kinsman and friend.....	Philip Merivale
GRATIANO, {	{ W. I. Percival
LORENZO, { Friends to Antonio	{ Horace Braham
SALARINO, { and Bassanio	{ Herbert Ranson
SOLANIO, }	{ Reginald Goode
SHYLOCK, the Jew.....	David Warfield
TUBAL, { Countrymen and friends	{ Albert Bruning
CHUS, { to Shylock	{ Morris Strassberg
LAUNCELOT GOBBO, servant to Shylock....	Percival Vivian
OLD GOBBO, father to Launcelot.....	Fuller Mellish
BALTHAZAR, steward to Portia.....	Charles Harbury
STEPHANO, a servant to Portia.....	E. H. Wever

CHARACTERS AND SCENES

LEONARDO, a servant to Bassanio.....Edward Crandall
A JESTER, at Belmont.....Warde de Wolfe
CLERK OF THE COURT.....Nick Long
A DUCAL MESSENGER.....H. Brown
PORTIA, a rich heiress.....Mary Servoss
NERISSA, her waiting gentlewoman.....Mary Ellis
JESSICA, daughter to Shylock.....Julia Adler
Magnificoes of Venice; Officers of the Court of Justice;
Gentlemen and Gentlewomen; Citizens of Venice; Jews;
Servants and Others.

PERIOD,—About the First Quarter of the Sixteenth Century.

PLACE,—in Italy: Partly in Venice, and partly at Belmont,
—the country seat of Portia upon the neighboring
mainland.

THE SCENES

AS ARRANGED IN THIS VERSION

FIRST ACT

First Scene, Venice; A Street, near to the Rialto. Time,
Morning.

Second Scene, Belmont; A Room in the House of Portia.
Time, Evening.

Third Scene, Venice; An Open Place, before a Synagogue.
Time, Late Afternoon.

SECOND ACT

First Scene, Venice; The House of Shylock. Time, Dusk
darkening to Night.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Second Scene (without pause), A Room in the House of Shylock.

An indeterminate lapse of time is supposed between the Second and Third Scenes. In presentation there will be the briefest possible interval between them.

Third Scene, The House of Shylock again. Time, Morning.

THIRD ACT

First Scene, Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the House of Portia. Time, Forenoon.

The Tableaux Curtains will be closed for one minute at the end of this scene.

Second Scene, The Casket Chamber again. Time, the next night.

The Tableaux Curtain will be closed for one minute at the end of this scene.

Another interval of a day and the double wedding (of Bassanio and Portia, Gratiano and Nerissa) is here supposed.

Third Scene, The Casket Chamber again. Time, at Sunset, the next day.

FOURTH ACT

Scene, Venice; A Court of Justice. Time, Midday.

FIFTH ACT

Scene, Belmont; A Garden to the House of Portia. Time, Midnight.

PRESENT PRODUCTION

THE PLAY PRODUCED UNDER THE PERSONAL DIRECTION OF
MR. BELASCO

THE SCENIC INVESTITURE BY ERNEST GROS

MUSIC BY NORMAN O'NEILL

Costumes Designed by Percy McQuoid, R.I., made by B. J. Simmons
& Co., Covent Garden, London.

Scenes Painted by Ernest Gros, with the assistance of
R. W. Bergman and H. Robert Law.

Electrical Effects by Louis Hartman.

Scenes Built by Charles L. Carson.

Women's Costumes for First Act, Second Scene; Third Act,
Second Scene, and Fifth Act, Designed and Made by
Mme. Gerber of Callot Sœurs, Paris.

Women's Costumes for Third Act, First Scene, Made by
Henri Bendel, New York.

Properties by Rosewag, Paris, Henry Gebhardt, Siedle Studios,
New York, and Matthew F. Purcell.

Renaissance Materials by Mariano Fortuny, Venice.

Curtains and Draperies by L. Kuhn, New York.

Wigs by Hepner, Broich, Zauder and John.

Shoes by Algamba, London, and I. Miller, New York.

Execution of Artistic Details of Costumes and Properties
Supervised by Elmer E. Tafinger.

Costumer with Company, Mme. Heerman.

Stage Director, Burk Symon.

Stage Manager, William Boag.

Musical Director, Edwin E. Ludig.

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PLATE NUMBER ONE

First Act, First Scene.—Venice; A Street, near to the Rialto

Antonio, Solanio, Bassanio, Salarino, Lorenzo and Gratiano

Bassanio

Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? say, when?
You grow exceeding strange: must it be so?

Salarino

We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.

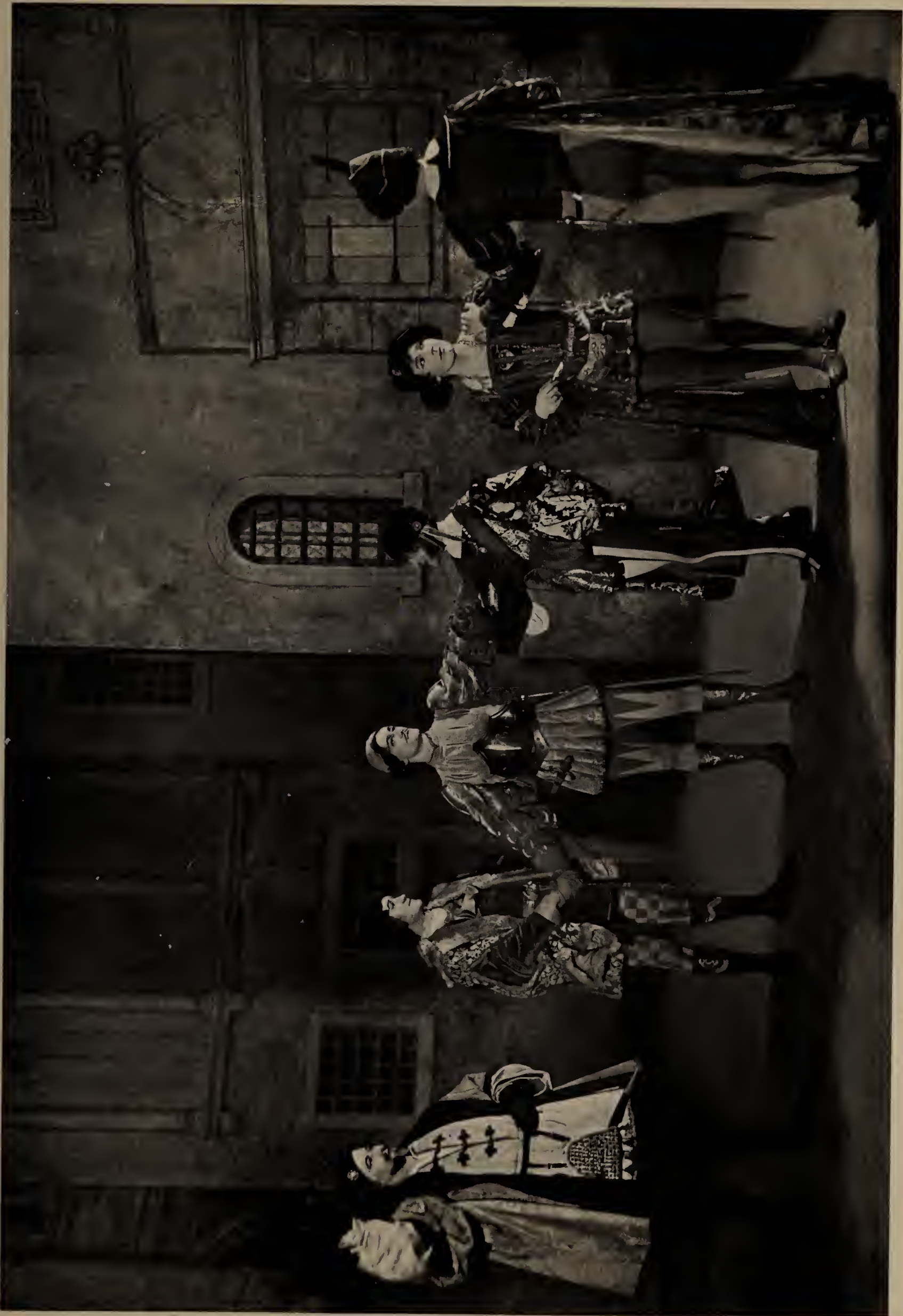


PLATE NUMBER TWO

First Act, First Scene.—Venice; A Street near to the Rialto

Antonio and Bassanio

Bassanio

I urge this childhood proof,
Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much; and, like a wilful youth,
That which I owe is lost: but if you please
To shoot another arrow that self way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
As I will watch the aim, or to find both,
Or bring your latter hazard back again,
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.



PLATE NUMBER THREE

First Act, Second Scene.—Belmont; A Room in the House of Portia

Portia and Nerissa

Nerissa

Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

Portia

Yes, yes, it was Bassanio: as I think, so was he called.



PLATE NUMBER FOUR

First Act, Third Scene.—Venice; An Open Place Before
a Synagogue

“And meet me at our synagogue.”



PLATE NUMBER FIVE

First Act, Third Scene.—Venice; An Open Place Before
a Synagogue

Shylock

How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian;
But more, for that, in low simplicity,
He lends out money gratis, and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.



PLATE NUMBER 212

First Act, Third Scene—Voice of Open Place before
a stage

It seems, Antonio and Elvira

Elvira

Antonio, I have a time, and off
in the night—you have told me
I have my money and my reason;
Still have I have it with a patient heart,
For suffering is the badge of all our tribe.

PLATE NUMBER SIX

First Act, Third Scene.—Venice; An Open Place Before
a Synagogue

Bassanio, Antonio and Shylock

Shylock

Signior Antonio, many a time,—and oft
In the Rialto,—you have rated me
About my moneys and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug;
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.



PLATE NUMBER SEVEN

Second Act, First Scene.—Venice; The House of Shylock

“Here dwells my father Jew.”



PLATE NUMBER EIGHT

Second Act, First Scene.—Venice; The House of Shylock

Shylock and Jessica

Shylock

Do as I bid you; shut doors after you:

“Fast bind, fast find,”—

A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.



PLATE NUMBER NINE

Second Act, First Scene.—Venice; The House of Shylock

“What, are there masques?”



THE NORTH STAR

Second Act, Second Scene—Yentse; A Room in the
House of Shikloek

"Let not the sound of shallow toppers enter
My sober house."

PLATE NUMBER TEN

Second Act, Second Scene.—Venice; A Room in the
House of Shylock

“Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house.”



PLATE NUMBER ELEVEN

Second Act, Second Scene.—Venice; A Room in the
House of Shylock

Shylock

Fled with a Christian!—O my Christian ducats!—
Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!



PLATE NUMBER TWELVE

Second Act, Third Scene.—Venice; The House of Shylock

Solanio, Salarino and Shylock

Salarino

Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's that good for?

Shylock

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew! Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge: if a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.



PLATE NUMBER THIRTEEN

Second Act, Third Scene.—Venice; The House of Shylock

Tubal and Shylock

Shylock

How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa? hast thou found my daughter?

Tubal

I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.



PLATE NUMBER FOURTEEN

Third Act, First Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

Balthazar, Nerissa, Portia, Attendants and Slaves

“There is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco.”



PLATE NUMBER FIFTEEN

Third Act, First Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

Slaves, The Prince of Morocco, Balthazar, Nerissa, Portia and
Attendants

Entrance of The Prince of Morocco



PLATE NUMBER NINETEEN

Third and First Streets—Baltimore: The Custom House in the
House of Representatives

The Prince of Monaco, his wife, and his children, with
and a daughter

Monaco

Mistake me not for my complexion,
The shadow's livery of the painted sun.
To whom I am a neighbor and next bed.

PLATE NUMBER SIXTEEN

Third Act, First Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

The Prince of Morocco, his Attendants, Balthazar, Nerissa, Portia
and Attendants

Morocco

Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,
To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.



PLATE NUMBER SEVENTEEN

Third Act, First Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

The Prince of Morocco, Nerissa, Portia, Jester

Morocco

Deliver me the key:
Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

Portia

There, take it, prince; and if my form lie there,
Then I am yours.



PLATE NUMBER EIGHTEEN

Third Act, First Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

Jester, Bassanio's Pages, Portia and Nerissa

Portia

Come, come, Nerissa, for I long to see
Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly!



PLATE NUMBER NINETEEN

Third Act, Second Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

Bassanio and Portia

Portia

Away, then! I am lock'd in one of them:
If you do love me, you will find me out.



MSO - Othman Smith

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Third and Second Rooms - Holborn; The Clerk's Chamber in the
House of Lords

Fourth

Now he goes:
I live about I live--with much more than I live.
I view the light than that mark of the day.

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MSO - Othman Smith

PLATE NUMBER TWENTY

Third Act, Second Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

Portia

Now he goes;
Live thou, I live:—with much-much more dismay,
I view the fight than thou that mak'st the fray.



PLATE THREE TWENTY-ONE

Third Act, Second Scene--Albano; The Countess in the
House of Lorraine

Nevers, Orleans, Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorraine

Albano

I pray you tell me how my good friend doth
The I am better

Albano

For with my love, unless it be in mind;
For with my love, unless it be in mind;
For with my love, unless it be in mind;

PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-ONE

Third Act, Second Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

Nerissa, Gratiano, Solanio, Bassanio, Jessica, Lorenzo and Portia

Bassanio

Ere I ope his letter,
I pray you, tell me how my good friend doth.

Solanio

Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind;
Nor well, unless in mind: his letter there
Will show you his estate.



PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-TWO

Third Act, Second Scene.—Belmont; The Casket Chamber in the
House of Portia

Jessica

When I was with him, I have heard him swear,
To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
Then twenty times the value of the sum
That he did owe him: and I know, my lord,
If law, authority, and power deny not,
It will go hard with poor Antonio.



PLATE NUMBER TWO

Portrait of—Venetian, Duke of Justice

Solano, Massimo, Salazar, Antonio, (the Duke of Justice)
Portrait, Venetian, Duke of Justice, Clerk of
the Court, Maximilian and Charles

Portrait

The quality of mercy is not seen in it—
It drops like the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed—
It blesses him that gives, and him that takes.
The mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes
The lion's monarch better than his crown;
This scepter shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Which doth sit the throne and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this scepter'd sway—
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-THREE

Fourth Act.—Venice; A Court of Justice

Solanio, Bassanio, Salarino, Gratiano, Antonio, Chus, Tubal,
Portia, Nerissa, The Duke of Venice, Clerk of
the Court, Magnificoes and Guards

Portia

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,—
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice bless'd,—
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown;
His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this scepter'd sway,—
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.



THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR LENOX TILDEN FOUNDATION

1892

FROM THE LIBRARY OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

1892

There is a little, there is something else
This book is a fine specimen of the
The words express a general feeling
Take from the book the word of God
But in the writing of it, it is not lost
One drop of Christian blood, the heart and soul
And by the name of Jesus, confessor
This is the name of Jesus

PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR

Fourth Act—Scene, Venice; A Court of Justice

Shylock

Most learnèd judge! A sentence! come, prepare!

Portia

Tarry a little! there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood,—
The words expressly are “a pound of flesh”:
Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;
But, in the cutting of it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice.



PLATE NUMBER THREE-ONE

Round top - round bottom - round top

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When you do take the means whereby I live,
Then do it wisely; you take my life,
You take my home, when you do take the prey
Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that.

PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-FIVE

Fourth Act.—Scene, Venice; A Court of Justice

Shylock

Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:
You take my house, when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house; you take my life,
When you do take the means whereby I live.



PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-SIX

Fifth Act.—Scene, Belmont; A Garden to the House of Portia

Lorenzo and Jessica

Lorenzo

In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise,—in such a night
Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls,
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.

Jessica

In such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o'er trip the dew,
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
And ran dismay'd away.



PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

Fifth Act.—Scene, Belmont; A Garden to the House of Portia

Jessica and Lorenzo

Jessica

I'm never merry when I hear sweet music.

Lorenzo

The reason is, your spirits are attentive.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.



PLATE I. — *Stenobothrus* *testaceus*

Fig. 1. — *Stenobothrus* *testaceus*; a. head to the base of the

base of the head; b. head to the base of the head; c. head to the

base

base of the head; d. head to the base of the head; e. head to the

base

PLATE NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

Fifth Act.—Scene, Belmont; A Garden to the House of Portia

Bassanio, Antonio, Portia, Nerissa, Jessica, Lorenzo and Gratiano

Portia

Nerissa teaches me what to believe:
I'll die for't but some woman had the ring.



TRIBUTES

FROM
THE PRESIDENT OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER
BROADWAY AT 116TH STREET
NEW YORK CITY

January 12, 1923

David Belasco, Esq.
115 West 44th Street
New York City

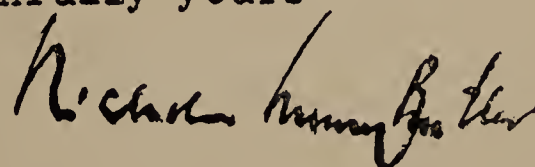
Dear Mr. Belasco

It would be difficult for me to exaggerate my pleasure and satisfaction at the performance of the "Merchant of Venice" which I saw last night. In complete adequacy, in sumptuousness of setting and of costume, and in complete harmony between the spoken word and the visible scene, the representation easily surpassed any Shakespearean production during my lifetime.

I congratulate you most warmly upon a notable contribution not only to the work of the stage but to the education and uplifting of public opinion and public feeling.

With high regard, and full appreciation of your courtesy, I am

Faithfully yours



MW

FROM THE PRESS

J. Ranken Towse
in "*The New York Evening Post*"

"What most matters is the prompt and grateful recognition that this representation is, in the main, an honest, capable, and discerning effort to enact a great classic play in the most advantageous manner, under existing circumstances, and with a scenic investiture of the most lavish, artistic and appropriate kind. . . . The successive stage pictures are as tasteful as they are splendid; the stage management is rarely skilful and vital, and the actors admirably drilled, generally competent, and in several instances of marked ability. The performance considered as a whole . . . completely puts into the shade every Shakespearean production since the days of Henry Irving."

Alan Dale
in "*The New York American*"

"Nothing like this 'Merchant of Venice' have I ever seen and I've seen a few stabs at it. If David Belasco had wished to terminate his career in a blaze of pyrotechnic glory, he might have chosen this production of 'The Merchant.' The gorgeousness of the Irving and the Tree productions, the sumptuousness of the old Daly revival, all sank, belittled, by the side of this. It was neither gaudy nor garish. It was neither too colored nor too massively imposing. Soft tints, exquisite costumes, shaded lighting and the strains of perfect music drifted through the evening, and when *Shylock* was not tugging at one's 'innards', these features were lulling the senses delightfully.

"The scene before the synagogue, with the lovely, melancholy cadences of the Hebrew music, the mad revels, the appealing artistry of the casket scenes and the entire series of episodic pictures all made this 'Merchant of Venice' unforgettable. It was a triumph of the Belasco genius—the genius that is sometimes derided for the 'cults' in their lofts and cubby holes. It was warm, convincing, intuitively artistic and utterly unusual. It was 'The Merchant' for the brand-new generation."

John Corbin
in "*The New York Times*"

"Seldom or never has pictorial Shakespeare been more beautiful. The scenes in Venetian residential streets, one of them showing the front of a synagogue, are admirable—architecturally as pictorially. The scene at *Portia's* villa is richly beautiful in the internal decorations and gives outward upon a landscape of vibrant aerial spaces. The scene of the trial is a riot of rich color and sober ornament, truly Venetian. The final outdoor scene at Belmont is an enchantment of moonlight and stars. *Opulent good taste could not do more to provide a variety of form and color, ravishing the senses.*"

Heywood Broun
in "*The New York World*"

"It is a vigorous and imaginative production. . . . The scenery ought to please all those who feel that there should be nothing of competition between the scenic artist and Shakespeare. The sets are amply beautiful. . . . On the whole, David Belasco and David Warfield have combined to offer additional evidence that this generation need not sit back in despair and talk longingly of the manner in which the great dead could play Shakespeare."

Percy Hammond
in "*The New York Tribune*"

"Mr. Belasco's counterfeit of the scenes is rich, and a more reticent background than most of the other remembered productions of the comedy, and surely more expressive. He gives you Venice, sun-flecked and shadow-stricken, and always full of movement and color, with the façades of its stately architecture outlined against an Italian sky. The garden at Belmont is most beautiful as an example of its kind; and all the pictures are as perfect as such spurious things can possibly be."

Stephen Rathbun
in "*The New York Evening Sun*"

"Mr. Belasco has outdone himself in this production, which contains many beautiful stage pictures."

Leo A. Marsh
in "*The New York Morning Telegraph*"

"Language is such a futile thing in the expression of emotions! . . . Tear the dictionary apart from cover to cover and glean out all the laudatory adjectives it possesses and yet one will find it difficult to do this production justice. Borrow the most glibly turned phrases of the master-users of English and we doubt if they, taken all together, would begin to give the reader an idea of the revelation-like acting of Mr. Warfield in the rôle of *Shylock*; the art of David Belasco in staging the performance, or the general beauty and colorfulness of the play as presented at the Lyceum Theatre. . . . In this, his latest effort, that masterful producer has fairly outdone himself. He has made a living, breathing thing of 'The Merchant of Venice' and transformed his audience into a body of beneficiaries in three and a half hours of entrancing time."

Burns Mantle
in "*The New York Daily News*"

Mr. Belasco has poured his soul and his fortune into this production. It is handsome, and bridges in a measure the old and the new schools of scenic investiture. It is solid and frequently it is pictorially striking. . . . The mood of romance that so perfectly suits the loves of *Bassanio* and *Portia* is beautifully sustained."

James Craig
in "*The New York Evening Mail*"

"The Maecenas of producers, David Belasco, has given the great Shakespearean comedy a production which, for opulence and splendor, has probably never

been matched in the play's history. . . . The settings and costuming made every one of the twelve scenes a spectacle. There were three street scenes, with massive buildings and deep perspectives. The ducal courtroom might well have witnessed the deliberation of the doges. Interior views were elaborately designed. Whatever was required in color, in lighting and in type character effects, was provided in unstinted measure."

Robert Welsh
in "*The New York Evening Telegram*"

"It is a great presentation, a brilliant achievement. Who that sees them will ever forget these superb stage pictures? The casket chamber in *Portia's* palace as Mr. Belasco presents it is sumptuous as any summer palace of the De Medici in the golden days of the Renaissance. And the men and women who swept up and down the broad, terraced steps leading up from a smiling countryside were dressed in fabulously precious raiment, gathered with the care of a connoisseur, from Old World collections."

"*The Court of Justice scene in this production has never been equalled in any previous production.* The scenes in the Jewish and in other quarters of Venice had a richness of tone and a solidness of construction that suggested the real Venice of long ago."

E. E. Pidgeon
in "*The New York Journal of Commerce*"

"It is a version new, in many respects of treatment, if not of interpretation—a Belasco version, that throbbed and thrilled with the reverence of one master of modern stagecraft for the other, who antedated him by three hundred years."

"It was a succession of delights, scenically and histrionically; a performance that will long be remembered by those fortunate enough to have witnessed it. Even the Belasco genius never conceived more beautiful and befitting scenic investitures and colorful pictures, and the performance taken as a whole was as nearly perfect as a first night may be. . . . There are not letters enough in 'Triumph' to express the verdict."

H. Z. Torres
in "The New York Commercial"

"Mr. Belasco has clothed this Shakespeare drama in wondrous beauty. He has made a production more stupendous, more opulently beautiful, than any staging upon which any curtain was ever raised! . . . A triumph of stagecraft as well as of beauty is this marvellous production by the man who proves anew his right to pre-eminence among theatrical geniuses of the world's history. Nor were the charm and novelty of this 'Merchant of Venice' confined to settings which were poems of color, symphonies of harmony, dazzling and awesome in their beauty. This Shakespeare production pulsates with life, is vibrant with passion. It is alive; gloriously, tinglingly alive; and presents a *Shylock* so tragic, so sympathetic, that all other *Shylocks* sink into insignificance beside it."

Charles Darnton
in "The New York Evening World"

"Great preparations had been made for this production, even to drawing on the riches of Venice for the settings. The result was a magnificent spectacle, set forth in a large yet unostentatious way. We had Shakespeare with beauty and without fads; opulent and sane, sumptuous and clear. When night crept into the street before *Shylock's* door, it was lighted only by the pitching lanterns of the merry-makers. A sense of desolation came with a glimpse into the house from which *Jessica* had flown. Stately magnificence marked the Court Scene. *Portia's* Garden, at Belmont, was a vision of moonlit loveliness. Belasco fulfilled every expectation of perfection . . . and made it all so superb that his 'Merchant of Venice' may fairly be said to be the greatest production of our greatest producer."

A FEW EXCERPTS FROM MANY LETTERS

From Samuel Harden Church
in a Letter to "The New York Times"

" . . . When we come to a consideration of Mr. Belasco's wonderful production of 'The Merchant of Venice' all criticism, it seems to me, stands disarmed in the triumph which has here been achieved. Mr. Warfield plays *Shylock* with an intensity and skill which give it the highest dramatic value, and Mr. Belasco's arrangement of the text is done with an intelligence and understanding that bring out the logical development of this absorbing story in a manner which would delight Shakespeare's own heart. With his good company of ladies and gentlemen, their rich and beautiful costumes, the elaborate scenery, and all the other generous accessories, we should all feel a desire to express our gratitude to Mr. Belasco for the artistic excellence with which he has presented this play. And what a joy it is to listen to the great speeches of Shakespeare in such an investiture as they roll across the stage like music from a grand opera! Never in the history of the Stage in modern times has there been such a glorious production of a Shakespearean drama. The whole nation should acclaim such a triumph. . . ."

Samuel Harden Church.

The Carnegie Institute,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

From Prof. William W. Lawrence, Columbia University

"It is a very beautiful and very sumptuous production,—which shows, throughout, evidence of the most careful thought for dramatic and scenic effect. The attention to detail is revealed in another way in the engagement of such distinguished actors as Mr. A. E. Anson and Mr. Albert Bruning for parts which are not generally considered important. It is also a pleasure to hear the blank verse read with good appreciation of cadence and meaning, which is not always the case nowadays. I found Mr. Warfield's conception of *Shylock* most interesting, and enjoyed the evening greatly.

"I shall have pleasure in commending the performance to members of my course in Shakespeare at this University. May I add the hope that this will not be the last of your Shakespearean productions?

Very sincerely yours,

"William W. Lawrence."

From William E. Grady, District Superintendent
of Public Schools, New York

"May I take this opportunity to express my appreciation of Mr. Warfield's splendid performance of *Shylock* and also to state that the settings, amid which

he displayed his fine art, surpass anything that I have seen on the stage. In my opinion the concluding Garden Scene was a perfect embodiment of fine stage setting and atmosphere, as well as excellent acting.

"With very best regards,

"Yours very truly,

"*William E. Grady.*"

From Prof. William Lyons Phelps, Yale University

"We were all enchanted. The beauty of the whole thing cast a spell over us and once more proved, that you are a magician. . . . I shall never forget the splendour and dignity of the whole performance.

"Gratefully yours,

"*William Lyon Phelps.*"

*From Emmanuel Lewin, Attorney and
Counsellor-at-Law*

"It is a pity, it is unjust, that your glorious incarnation of 'The Merchant' may not be kept whole for other ages. Other arts live beyond the generations that give them creation. If only human ingenuity could devise a means of projecting *yours* into the years to come!

"It is wonderful to have seen it—to know that memory, however fragile, can conjure, in all its vividness, your beautiful pictures of long ago!

"Truly yours,

"*Emmanuel Lewin.*"

From Lawrence Reamer, Famous Dramatic Critic

"This is just to add another voice to the chorus of praise which greeted your triumph on Thursday—not your greatest triumph, since it never seems possible to say that of anything you do, because there is certain to follow something else to show another and higher achievement of your genius! But last night showed so plainly your great qualifications to find success of the highest type, in any field you may enter. You were in worthy society—you and Mr. Warfield and Shakespeare. It was a great delight to witness the glorious event of the meeting of these three. . . .

"Sincerely your admirer,

"*Lawrence Reamer.*"

TELEGRAM.—*From Stanislavsky,
Director of The Moscow Art Theatre*

"Receive, my dear Mr. Belasco, from my company and from me, our heartiest thanks for the opportunity you gave us to admire the American Art in her best manifestation. Our congratulations to you, to Mr. Warfield, and to all the company

"*Stanislavsky.*"

From Balieff, of The Chauve-Souris

"Having witnessed the performance of 'The Merchant of Venice,' so marvellously acted by Mr. David Warfield, I and my whole company wish to convey to you our sincerest gratitude for the pleasure you gave us.

"On reading your letter, reprinted in the New York papers, to Mr. Morris Gest, regarding the Moscow Art Theatre, and comparing your stage-settings, with those of the Moscow Art Theatre, I am filled with profound respect and enraptured reverence before your modesty!

"Sincerely yours,

"*Balieff.*"

From Seymour Oppenheimer, M.D.

"In all my years of theatre-going, I have never been so impressed with such a human interpretation of a character as Mr. Warfield's *Shylock*. My professional training shows me, oftentimes, the emotional working of the inner mind and soul,—therefore I feel well qualified in expressing the above opinion; and throughout all the guidance of your masterly hand is most apparent. *To me it would seem as the crowning work of your wonderful career.*

"Faithfully yours,

"*Seymour Oppenheimer.*"

From Prof. Charles Sears Baldwin, Columbia University

"Though my memories go back through Irving to Booth, I have never seen the play presented with more careful detail or with quite so splendid stage pictures. . . .

"Yours faithfully,

"*Charles Sears Baldwin.*"

From Prof. J. P. Gaines, Columbia University

"I cannot tell you how greatly I enjoyed the performance of 'The Merchant of Venice.' The acting and the beauty of the scenes combined in *an effect which surpasses any Shakespearean drama I have ever witnessed.*

"As a student of Shakespeare I have often been aware of the great chasm between the sweep of his imaginative appeal and the actual presentation on the stage: something, I suppose, in the fashion of Charles Lamb's opinion concerning 'King Lear.' You have bridged this gulf—in a production that realizes at once the greatest dramatic possibilities and the richest imaginative stimulation. My humble opinion is that you have made an invaluable and a permanent contribution to the Art of the Theatre.

"Yours very cordially,
"J. P. Gaines."

TELEGRAM.—From Zoe Akins

"I saw 'The Merchant of Venice' to-night, and I cannot wait to tell you how beautiful it was! It is the most wonderful production I have ever seen, in a theatre profoundly lovely, magical and reverent. I hope the world knows and appreciates what you are giving it. Warfield was magnificent! I never left a theatre so reluctantly. I wanted to sit still and see it all over again! Please accept my sincere congratulation and much gratitude and affection.

"Zoe Akins."

From Fred, and Fanny, Hatton

"We are happy to hear that the play is the success you deserve, for we never have seen a more beautiful presentation of Shakespeare, nor a 'Merchant of Venice' with a more human and understandable *Shylock*. And as time goes on and rival managers bring forth their foggy and impressionistic conceptions of Shakespeare we feel this production of yours will mount like a spire above a city. The detail, the color, the atmosphere of Venice and old Italy, the splendid acting, the costuming,—*all* these items united to make a harmonious whole which left on us an indelible impression of a great night in the modern theatre. . . .

"Fred, and Fanny, Hatton."

From Janet Beecher

"I want to thank you for 'The Merchant of Venice' I saw this afternoon and it so enthralled me, that I could hardly labor thru my own performance tonight! You have done what you always do—helped to the 9th degree; and even though I must admit your *Shylock* is a genius, you place him so that his 'light may shine,' *for no one knows this better than one who has worked with you.* Please believe me when I say I was deeply impressed and deeply appreciative.

"Affectionately,
"Janet Beecher."

From Prof. George C. D. O'Dell, Columbia University

"I wish to thank you for the renewed pleasure I had in seeing, for a second time, your *superb* 'Merchant of Venice.' The production is *the most magnificent Shakespearean offering I have beheld since the days of Irving;* and I believe it is fine for the same reason that his revivals were fine—the infinite care spent on every detail, both of the play and of the setting and acting.

"I was interested to notice how much the actors have grown into their characters, and how skilfully they play together in the big scenes. Surely, artistically, you have gained greatly by engaging for smaller parts such men as Mr. Anson, Mr. Bruning, and Mr. Mellish. . . .

"How gratified you must be, in beholding this splendid production—a realization of a dream of years! It must also be a source of satisfaction to find that the greatest admirers of this revival are precisely those men who have had opportunity to see the notable performances of the past; in other words, *those best qualified to judge are warmest in their approval.* . . .

"Very sincerely yours,
"George C. D. O'Dell."

MR. BELASCO ON THE COMIC SHYLOCK

A Letter to "The New York Times"

To the Dramatic Editor:

In your comments last Sunday on my remarks concerning the character of *Shylock* you do not give altogether a correct or fair impression as to my views. I trust that I may say this without offense, and that, as

a matter of mere justice, you will find room for this, my rejoinder.

You write: "There may be those, however, who hold that *red hair* is *not* necessarily side-splitting."

Now, that comment, I submit, taken with its context in your article, implies that I *do* hold that red hair, if not "side-splitting," is, at least, *necessarily* comic.

But the exact opposite is, in fact, what I hold, and what, in my remarks concerning the character of *Shylock*, I maintain. These are "the very words" upon that matter which I wrote: "A red wig is *no bar to a tragic impersonation*. . . . Who that ever saw the younger James W. Wallack's red-haired *Fagin* would ever have called it a *comic* embodiment?"

Being, therefore, in complete agreement with you that red hair is *not* necessarily "side-splitting," or even comic, I am not willing your readers should suppose otherwise.

You say I hold "that the modern producer has every right to *exercise his fancy* in improving" Shakespeare. I have not said or implied anything of the kind. I *do* hold, however, that the modern manager, when producing a play by Shakespeare, has every right, reverently, thoughtfully and discreetly, to cut and adapt that play to the requirements of the modern Stage. But that is something vitally different from "exercising fancy" in "*improving* Shakespeare"!

You write further: "Candidly stated, the question is whether, as conceived by Shakespeare and acted by Burbage, *Shylock* had a *comic* aspect; and, if so, what was the precise nature of this appeal to an audience's risibilities?"

That, most certainly, is *not* "the question." It has often been asserted that *Shylock* was acted by Richard Burbage, in Shakespeare's time, "as a low comedy character." The natural *implication* is, of course, that if Burbage so acted *Shylock* in Shakespeare's time and under his direction, Shakespeare so conceived *Shylock* and that *Shylock* should be so presented.—We all, surely, agree that a character ought to be interpreted as it is conceived and depicted by its creator, the author.

Now, my points are these: That not even one scintilla of evidence has been produced to sustain the assertion that *Shylock* was played as a low comedy character in Shakespeare's presence *or period*; that the only testimony even indirectly or by implication tending to indicate that *Shylock* was there and then so played is an allusion in a document which is a manifest forgery, and that, *per contra*, the experience of *Shylock* as depicted

by Shakespeare is certainly *not* comic and certainly *is*, essentially, tragic.

Whether or not the audience of Shakespeare's time recognized and appreciated the tragic nature of *Shylock's* experience is immaterial—certainly as far as my remarks upon that character are concerned. Even assuming that the audience of Shakespeare's time found *Shylock's* experience comic, the fact of its tragic nature is not altered.—I remember to have heard some persons laugh upon beholding an accident in which frightful and fatal injuries befell others. To them the *spectacle*, presumptively, was comic. The *experience* to those upon whom it came was indisputably tragic. It is even so with *Shylock*.

To say that: "Lansdowne's version [of 'The Merchant'] held the boards for full forty years" is to give an incorrect impression. That version, first produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1701, was during the following forty years (according to Genest's record—the only one we have) revived but *three* times and received altogether perhaps *twenty* performances (there is specific *record* of *but four*).

And while the great Shakespeare scholar, Dr. Furness, was (as you quote him) " 'inclined to leniency' toward his ignoble Lordship," in the matter of his perversion of Shakespeare, it is only fair to remark, also, that his lenient inclination was but the prompting of his ever-sweet and gentle nature; and that, moreover—upon the same page where he specifies that inclination—he also wrote: "Our cheeks grow hot enough with shame over Dryden, or Shadwell, or Otway, or 'When Tate put his book into the nostrils of the Leviathan'; but *all is as nothing* to the sight of *Shylock* drinking to his 'Mistress Money,' and shouting a toast to 'Interest upon Interest'."

Furness likewise wrote, let me remind your readers, as to the character of *Shylock* and the manner of presenting it, these simple and sensible words: "We frequently hear it asserted that *Shylock* was at one time acted as a comic part [note me, signior, *not* acted with a comic *aspect* but acted *as a comic part*]*—an assertion which should not be made without qualification; it was not Shylock, but a thing called 'Shylock' in Lansdowne's version. There is no ground for the belief that Shylock was ever presented on the stage in a comic light. To assert it is to imply that Lansdowne's 'Shylock' and Shakespeare's Shylock are identical.*" As 'tis surely "better to err with Pope than shine with Pye," so, I trust, I may be pardoned for wishing in this matter to

demonstrate myself “‘i’ the right”—with Furness and many another great scholar of the study and the stage.

One thing more and then, at least for the present, “the rest is silence.” I cannot agree with you that, “to make a true evaluation of certain phases of *Lear* or *Hamlet* or *Shylock*, we must look to the sculptures on the great Gothic cathedrals”; nor can I believe that the existence of certain carvings, depicting “Rabelaisian obscenity” under some of the seats in Trinity Church, Stratford (carvings which Shakespeare may or may not have seen), has any bearing, direct or indirect, upon any work of Shakespeare’s.

Study of the periods in which Shakespeare’s plays are to be placed is, indeed, invaluable—in providing for those plays a proper and effective investiture. But for a true “evaluation” of his characters, in any phase, we have neither need nor authority to go outside the plays in which they are depicted. It is in those plays, and in those plays *only*, that those characters exist. They are often (because of their scope and power) characters difficult of complete portrayal; they are characters never difficult to comprehend or evaluate.

David Belasco.

New York, Jan. 11, 1923.

WARFIELD AND SHYLOCK

Many years ago, in old San Francisco, part of my employment was that of stage manager at the Bush Street Theatre. Among the ushers, there was a quaint little fellow, with a ready, appealing smile and bright, earnest eyes. He longed, so somebody told me, to be an actor. My residence at the time was on the top floor of a house near to the theatre. One day, while at home, working on the script of a play, I heard a voice, coming up from the street, declaiming—“with good accent and good discretion.” Looking out at window, I saw below, standing upon a soap-box, surrounded by a curious but interested crowd, the little usher—reciting, with an intensity and feeling which at once impressed and attracted me. Afterward we met and later we became friends.

A short while ago, I stood in the shadows, back-stage, at the Lyceum Theatre, in New York; said, with all my heart, “Good luck!”—and saw a small, sturdy man, a very personification of Jewish good and bad; intense, nervous, yet resolute and bold, step out for the first time before a metropolitan audience, as *Shylock*, in Shakespeare’s immortal drama of olden Venice, saw him step out and then stand, silent and tense, till the long salvos of deafening applause died away and he could speak.

One and the same—the little lad of the San Francisco soap-box, and the great artist, eminent, respected, *acclaimed*; the leader of the American Stage, standing there before an eager and delighted audience of representative men and women, waiting to personate for them one of the most difficult test characters of Shake-

speare. One, and the same,—the one and only David Warfield!

A great man has written: “It is the nature of a passionate desire to fulfill itself.” Even so. One of the most truly passionate desires of my life has been worthily to produce, under my own sole management and responsibility, the plays of Shakespeare. For twenty years I schemed and strove to revive “The Merchant of Venice” and present Warfield as *Shylock*. At last I have done so—not, I am glad to believe, without at least approaching my own standard of merit! I have to acknowledge,—and I do, most gratefully,—the assistance of many co-laborers, both before and behind the curtain. But I feel that this frail little memorial of one of my proudest achievements would be, indeed, incomplete if it did not contain my specific and heartfelt tribute to my chief associate and life-long friend.

I have, I think, seen all the representative *Shylocks* of the past half-century—and it is my deliberate and considered opinion that I have never seen a *Shylock* so thoroughly human and convincing; so absolutely individual and real; so picturesque, impressive, emotional, varied, intense, vital and entirely interesting as the *Shylock* of David Warfield.

It is a long, long road, and hard, which he has travelled, from the far-off soap-box days in old San Francisco to those of his metropolitan appearance in this most exacting character; a road as long and hard as that traversed by any actor in all the teeming annals of the Stage. But he has trod it with unflinching courage and high purpose; he has come by it to a glorious ful-

filment and triumph; to where he has written his name upon the scroll of genius and fame in letters of indelible light, along with those of Macklin and Henderson and Kean and Macready and Booth and Irving and Mansfield! It is a dear privilege for me to add my sprig of laurel to the wreath wherewith his affectionate admirers crown his brilliant achievement.

If, in time to come, the considerate eyes of critical inquiry chance to read these words of mine, let it not be supposed that they spring from friendship's fond partiality. They do but echo a general estimate—in witness whereof I here append some of the golden opinions he has won in mouths of wisest censure:

"The most human and comprehensible of modern *Shylocks*."—HEYWOOD BROWN. "What matters most is that Warfield's *Shylock* is a true and a real and an interesting *Shylock*."—ALEXANDER WOOLLCOOTT. "Warfield's *Shylock* one of great merit and intelligence."—J. RANKEN TOWSE. "Warfield received tumultuous applause, in wave after wave, men and women vying to see who could shout 'Bravo!' the loudest."—JAMES CRAIG. "Warfield's performance does honor to the actor's ambition and provides a genuine privilege to the rising generation."—JOHN CORBIN. "Warfield plays

Shylock as none other ever has.—A *Shylock* that electrified and gripped us."—ALAN DALE. "Warfield's name was added to the scroll in the Thespian Hall of Fame, beside those of Kean, Booth and Irving."—E. E. PIDGEON. "Warfield triumphs as *Shylock*."—LEO MARSH. "Warfield's *Shylock* is the best conception of the character ever given; beside it all other *Shylocks* sink into insignificance."—H. Z. TORRES. "Warfield is a true *Shylock*, utterly unlike any we had ever seen."—CHARLES DARNTON.

There is one more word of special appreciation and thanks due from me, to a brave and loyal member of my company, my dear friend Miss Mary Servoss. But for her courage and high sense of duty it would have been necessary to postpone my production of "The Merchant"—because, at the last moment, she was stricken with dangerous illness, such as might be expected utterly to incapacitate any player. But, for my sake, for the sake of all her associates, she insisted upon appearing as *Portia*, regardless of any consequences—and did so, playing that part with equal pleasure to her audience and honor to herself, and in a manner worthy of even her most admired predecessors. Her devotion I shall not forget.

David Belasco.



VALE !

March 5, 1923

Ladies and Gentlemen of "The Merchant of Venice":

In all my long theatrical experience it has not been my privilege to direct a more distinguished, a more variously and brilliantly talented, company than that which is made up by you and headed by my friend and associate of many years, Mr. David Warfield.

I feel that no interpretation of "The Merchant" has been given in my time—and I have seen them all—finer, more conscientious, thorough, varied, entertaining and delightful than that which has been given by you. The pleasure with which your performance has been received by your audiences—pleasure manifested in the most spontaneous and unmistakable manner and endorsed at leisure not only by hundreds of private individuals who have written personal letters to me but also by the most thoughtful and authoritative dramatic critics—gives me the gratifying assurance that my high, grateful estimate of the excellence of your efforts is not singular to myself but is shared by all those best qualified to judge.

It has been said—with kindly intent, I know—that your performance is "a Belasco performance": that its thoroughness, spontaneity and general merit are due to *my* long experience and unremitting labor in direction. Vanity might prompt me to lay that flattering unction to my soul and rest content. But my sense of justice will not permit. I feel that I am but one of the humblest contributors to your triumph: that I owe you a great debt of appreciation and gratitude. And now, at the beginning of this the last week of our first season together in Shakespeare, I ask you, one and all, the most obscure as well as the most eminent, to accept my hearty congratulations and my heartfelt thanks. To all of you, now and in the time to come, I wish health, happiness and content. Think of me as your friend, and be sure that for my part,

*"I count myself in nothing else so happy
As in a soul rememb'ring my good friends!"*

DAVID BELASCO.

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